to be packed in High Density Polythene woven sacks or jute bags laminated or lined with plastic films. Railways endeavour to spply covered wagons during certain periods of rainy season to the extent possible. There have been time lag between registration and supply of wagons on some Railways due to competing demands but efforts have been made to step-up wagon supplies giving priorities to areas needing urgent movement.

Situation in J & K

543. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether steps are being taken by Government to settle J & K affairs;

(b) if so, what is the present position; and

(c) the details of the measures adopted to bring back normalcy in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI): (a) to (c) The aim of the Government is to ensure that complete peace and normalcy, and towards this end the democratic and representative institutions, are restored in the State of Jammu and Kashmir at the earliest. The Government is keeping a close watch and is continuously reviewing the situation, and a number of steps have been taken to creat conditions conducive to this objective. These include; sustained and targetted operations to contain the activities of the militants and reduce the fear of the gun; stepping up the peace of development and economic activities in the State to create additional employment opportunities for the youth and motivating the people to move towards their normal life and activities; reactivation of the civil administration and restoring its morale and normal activities; efforts to strengthen the confidence of the people in and enlisting their cooperative with the administration; reactivation of the political elements in the State; and, encouragement to the people to strengthen the peace process through other confidence building measures, including increased transparency, release of detenues, etc.

Government has also been holding consultations with leaders of the various political parties and groups at the national level and from the State. Recently the Prime Minister also made a Statement which *inter-alia* states the commitment of the Government to preserve the special Constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir, its willingness to strengthen the autonomy of the State, within the Constitution, keeping in view the aspirations of the people of the entire State, and restoration of the nomenclatures of "Wazir-e-Azam" and "Sadar-e-Riyasat" and the plans of the Government to formulate additional financial and development benefits for the State.

The various measures taken by the Government have had a definite positive impact on the situation and the overall atmoshpere and mood of the people, and after considering all aspects of the situation the Government had recently recommended to the Election Commission to initiate steps for conducting elections in the State. However, the Election Commission did not agree with the recommendation. A public interest litigation has been filed against the decision of the Commission and the matter is now sub-judice. Government will continue to make intensive efforts to further consolidate the situation towards its earlier stated objectives.